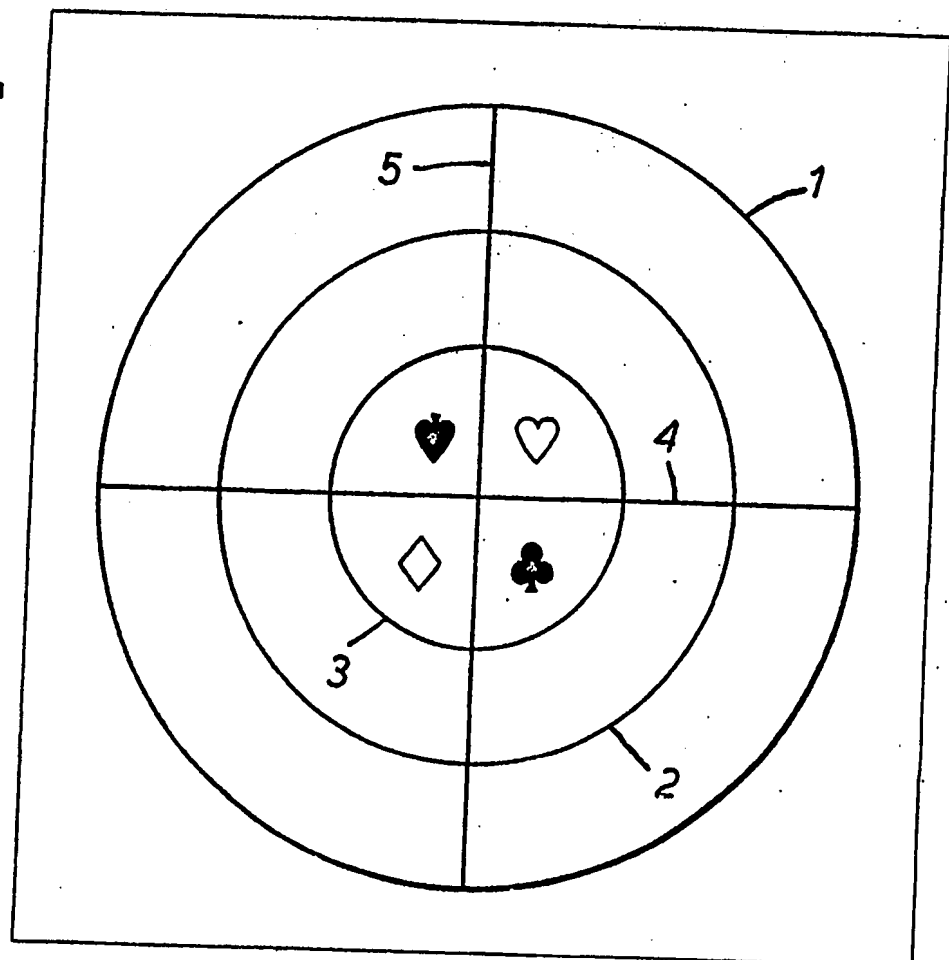


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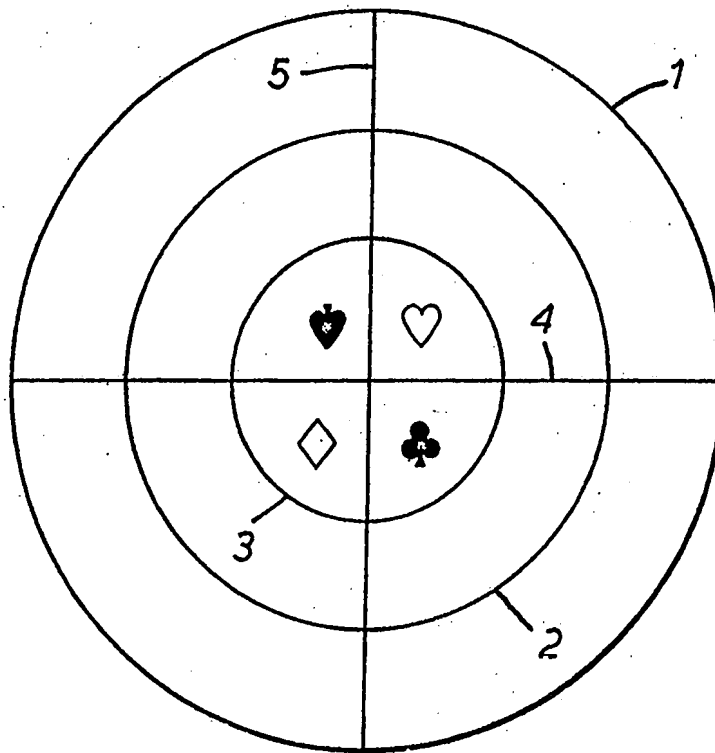
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(54) Coin-operated gaming or amusement machines

(57) A fruit machine has a symbol display other than the reels, which is used when a gamble feature is randomly available. The player can select any symbol of this display, and then the machine makes its random selection. If there is coincidence a win is achieved, and this may be a doubling or some multiple of a win already achieved from the reels. The machine may make more than one random selection, increasing the possible win. The odds on selection of the various symbols may vary, those with less likelihood of selection generating bigger wins. The preferred display is circular, with the symbols being those of a pack of cards and assigned to respective sectors.



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SPECIFICATION

Improvements relating to coin-operated gaming or amusement machines

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This invention relates to coin-operated or coin-freed gaming or amusement-with-prizes machines, and the term "coin" is intended in this Specification to embrace tokens which can be obtained from the proprietor of the machine in exchange for normal money.

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This invention is concerned with machines of the kind known as fruit machines in which a series of symbols carried by rotatable drums, reels, discs or their equivalents, is displayed to view in a line. For convenience, reference will henceforth simply be made to reels. When the machine is operated by insertion of a coin, and possibly also by depression of a lever or pressing of a button or the like, the reels rotate and stop in an apparently random manner, and if the symbols in the resulting line are in a winning combination, a pay-out mechanism is operated and a prize is awarded and indicated.

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In order to add to the interest of such machines, it is common to add an extra 'feature' by which there is occasionally the chance of a prize being awarded for some occurrence beyond the simple arrival of the reels, after their initial spin, at a particular combination line.

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According to the present invention there is provided a fruit machine of the kind described having a gamble feature in which on random occasions the player is offered a choice from a plurality of symbols on a display other than the reels, and wherein when such symbol has been selected, by an action such as pressing a button, there is a random selection of these symbols by the machine, coincidence of these selections resulting in a win or an increase of a win already achieved from the reels.

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There may be more than one such random selection, so that it is possible for the same symbol to be chosen more than once in a single play. In that case, there can be an even better win. Conveniently, any existing win may be doubled or otherwise multiplied by a factor corresponding to the number of correct random selections.

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In one preferred form, the display is circular with the symbols identifying various sectors. Once a sector is chosen, lights or other indicator means may progress around the display, sector by sector, and stop in a random fashion. If they finish in a selected sector, then a win is achieved.

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For a better understanding of the invention, one embodiment will now be described, by way of example, with reference to the accompanying drawing in which the single Figure is a diagrammatic face view of a panel of a fruit machine.

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It will be understood that the fruit machine

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will have the usual arrangement of reels or their equivalents which can be rotated to stop showing various combinations of symbols on a line. These can have associated features which are now common, such as "hold" or "nudge" buttons, but these form no part of the present invention.

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The panel has a circular display consisting of concentric rings 1 and 2 about a centre circle 3, all these being divided in quadrant fashion by diametral lines 4 and 5. Thus the central area has four right angled sectors which in this example are marked with the playing card symbols of a spade, heart, club and diamond. These sectors may be, or form part of, corresponding selector buttons so that if, for example, the player presses the club, he would be making a conscious selection of the club quadrant for the purposes described below. Alternatively they may simply be ornamental, with a selector elsewhere, as described below.

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The rings 1 and 2 are marked on translucent material and each individual zone of 90° arc can be illuminated by an associated light behind the panel. These lights are used in the following manner.

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The player will occasionally be offered a gamble feature in which this display panel comes into action. This feature may occur at random, independently of the reels, or it may occur when certain symbol combinations on the reels finish on the win line. The occurrence of this feature may be signified in many different ways, but one preferred one is for the inner circle 3 to be illuminated, this also being on translucent material. There would then be individual lights behind each card symbol sector, arranged to illuminate each such sector in cyclic succession, going either clockwise or anti-clockwise. As the playing card symbols are illuminated, each for a brief period of time, the player can decide on which quadrant he is going to gamble. If he decides on the spade quadrant, he would press a selector button when the spade sector is illuminated. The same button would be used for other quadrants, by being pressed at the appropriate moment.

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Having made that choice, the rings 1 and 2 are brought into play. The arcuate zones are then also illuminated in a cyclic fashion so that it appears as if lights are rotating behind the panel. The rotation in the outer ring may be in the opposite direction to that in the inner ring. Eventually, this rotation stops, and if it does so with a light in the same quadrant as the selected card symbol, then any win on the machine is doubled. If it should happen that both lights stop in that quadrant, then the win is quadrupled.

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There may be one or more than two rings and the circle may be divided into other than right angled sectors, not necessarily all equal. For example small arc zones, illuminated for a

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shorter time than large arc zones and therefore with less chance of being lit when the cycle ceases, may be arranged to give better odds.

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CLAIMS

1. A fruit machine having a gamble feature in which on random occasions the player is offered a choice from a plurality of symbols on a display other than the reels, and wherein when such a symbol has been selected, by an action such as pressing a button, there is a random selection of these symbols by the machine, coincidence of the random selection with the previous player selection resulting in a win or an increase of a win already achieved from the reels.
2. A fruit machine as claimed in claim 1, wherein there is more than one such random selection.
3. A fruit machine as claimed in claim 2, wherein any existing win is multiplied by a factor corresponding to the manner of random selections coincident with the previous player selection.
4. A fruit machine as claimed in claim 1, 2 or 3, wherein the display is circular with the symbols identifying various sectors.
5. A fruit machine as claimed in claim 4, wherein during the gamble feature lights or other indicator means progress around the display, sector by sector, stopping at random in a selected sector generating a win.
6. A fruit machine as claimed in claim 4 or 5, wherein the sectors are not all uniform, and the dwell of the indicator means in each sector corresponds to its arc, any win being weighted progressively more the smaller the sector generating that win.
7. A fruit machine substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to the accompanying drawing.